

# County Commissioners put bonds on ballot

## Public sounds off on the bonds before the vote

BY TODD LUCK  
THE CHRONICLE

It's all up to the voters now, as the Forsyth County Board of Commissioners voted to place \$430 million in bonds on the November ballot.

Commissioners voted on the measure during its regular meeting on Monday, Aug. 8, after a public comment session on the bonds. The vote was 5-2 with County Commissioners Richard Linville and Gloria Whisenhunt voting against it. Both have voiced opposition to the size of the bonds, saying it was too much debt for the county to take on if voters approve them. Whisenhunt also

In a letter to the commissioners, the coalition asked for the construction of a new middle school in East Winston. It also objected to the \$25 million replacement school for Ashley Academy being removed from the bond and replaced with \$900,000 for a shovel-ready plan to be implemented in a future bond. The letter also opposed the new middle school at Smith Farm to relieve Southeast Middle School, because the coalition said it will increase racial and economic segregation.

County Commissioner Everette Witherspoon responded, saying that the biggest single bond project

replacements and expansions of existing ones in the bond, are focused on relieving schools that are over capacity.

There were also several speakers like Robert Watkins, who felt it was just too much debt for the county to take on.

"Is that fiscal responsibility?" he asked. "Is that for the future of our children?"

A string of other speakers, including Ronda Mays, president of the Forsyth County Association of Educators, and several principals felt it would be money well spent. Lowrance Middle School Principal Peggy Dickey said it would be good for

# "Where do those kids go to school around East Winston?"

—Ike Howard, president of the local NAACP

said she felt the eight-year window for the school bond funds to be allocated was too long and that current needs may change over that time span.

Before the vote, there was a public comment period with proponents and opponents each using most of their allocated 15 minutes to speak on the \$350 million school bond.

Members of the Community School Bond Coalition wanted changes to the bond because they felt it lacks equity. Robert Leak III said he felt not enough was being done for Easton Elementary and East Winston. Carolyn Highsmith, president of the New South Community Coalition, asked that the work be monitored so priority projects were done in a timely manner. Ike Howard, president of the local NAACP chapter, said there was no "proper" middle school in East Winston and that many parents are sending their children elsewhere.

"Where do those kids go to school around East Winston?" he asked. "They don't go to school in East Winston."

involved replacing an East Winston school, with nearly \$47 million going to build a new home for Lowrance Middle School on the campus of Paisley IB Magnet School and to also expand the existing school there.

Also in the bond, Easton Elementary has \$9 million to add 12 classrooms, a new cafeteria and two pre-K classrooms. There are improvements to schools across the system, such as equipping every classroom with new technology and updating media centers with a 3-D printer in every school.

County Commissioner Walter Marshall responded by saying that students are going to school outside of East Winston, not because there aren't enough schools there, but because that's where parents are choosing to send them. Winston-Salem Preparatory Academy has a middle and high school in that part of town, but is under capacity. The school system has been looking at ways to attract more students to WSPA. School system officials have said the new schools, along with

the community and for her school, which had to move because of toxicity concerns on its old campus.

"Right now we're a wing and a pod at Atkins High School because we had to move, and we're woefully in need of some space," she said.

School board members like Elisabeth Motsinger also spoke in support of the bond.

"Budgets are moral statements and they say what we value and we back it up with dollars," she said. "Our children obviously should be our shared, most precious resource."

The school bond is one of three bonds the commissioners approved. The other two are a \$65 million Forsyth Tech Bond and a \$15 million parks and recreation bond. If all three are approved, county property taxes will increase by 3.6 cents in 2018 per \$100 of property value and another 3.8 cents in 2022.

Community School Bond Coalition members said Monday they hadn't decided yet whether to support the school bond in November.

## County considers combining recycling and garbage services

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

County commissioners asked staff to look into combining its garbage and recycling services during a briefing on Thursday, Aug. 4.

Minor Barnette, director of Forsyth's Environmental Assistance and Protection office, presented the combined service as an option for county recycling. The current recycling contractor, Waste Industries, is not renewing its contract, which will run out at year's end. It's the second recycling provider to not renew. Low participation and a downturn in commodities have made it hard for these companies to make money.

The county offers voluntary garbage and recycling service in the unincorporated parts of the county for a fee. Of the 22,000 houses in those areas, 13,000 use the garbage service, but only 2,600 subscribe to the recycling. The hope is that combining the two services for one fee will attract enough participation to sustain recycling. Barnette said the three current garbage contractors have indicated an interest in such a move.

County Commissioner Walter Marshall was the sole commissioner who said that instead of a voluntary program, the county should have mandatory recycling.

## County, city lowering jobs requirement in Caterpillar incentive deals

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

During the Monday, Aug. 8, regular county commissioners meeting, a change to the Caterpillar incentive agreement was approved.

Commissioners approved a change that would extend the agreement five years and add Caterpillar subsidy, Progress Rail, to the 2011 agreement for \$10.1 million in incentives. It also lowers the minimum jobs the Caterpillar facility can have in order to not trigger clawback provisions from 196 to 100. This is higher than the original 50 jobs Caterpillar originally asked for.

Also that night, the finance committee of the Winston-Salem City Council approved the same change for its \$13.35 million in incentives, which is expected to go to the full council on Aug. 15.

Due to a global decline in the mining

industry, there's been less demand for Caterpillar trucks, which the Winston-Salem facility makes the axles for. Caterpillar's workforce has been reduced from 341 employees last year to 289 in January. Lowering the job requirement will let the facility not default on its incentive deals during a transitional period as it brings in Progress Rail, which makes train parts, to bring jobs back to the facility.

Mayor Allen Joines and several council members said that though Caterpillar would have to pay the incentives back if it closed the facility, they'd much rather alter the deal and keep the jobs in the community.

"We want to thank you for not closing the doors and cutting off the lights," City Council Member D.D. Adams told representatives of Caterpillar.

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DID YOU KNOW?

- By 3 months, babies should recognize familiar faces and hold their heads steady.
- By 6 months, babies should roll over.
- They should be able to say at least 3 words by their 1st birthday, and be able to kick a ball by their 2nd birthday.

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In celebration of the 250th anniversary of the founding of Salem, NC, gather on Salem Square to hear concerts by the Gammie Brass (11th), Bob Moody & Friends (12th), and the Salem Band (13th). Music presented by Salem's Retirement Community. Immediately following the concerts, experience a magical light show with music and words that tell the story of Salem. Created in partnership with the Winston-Salem Light Project. Free and a nonperishable food donation to benefit Sunnyside Ministry is encouraged.



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